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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

January 14, 2004

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OFFICER:

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Chao:

It has come to my attention that a recent application for Trade Adjustment Assistance by former employees of Ethan Allen Interiors, Inc., Beecher Falls, Vermont (reference case number TA-W-53,349), received a negative determination and that the petitioners have submitted a request for reconsideration of this determination. I strongly encourage you to give full and fair consideration to this request.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, imports from China of wood beds and other bedroom furniture, which are manufactured by Ethan Allen, increased 121 percent in value from 2000 to 2002. During the same period, the domestic industry's shipments fell 21 percent, sales dropped 20 percent, and operating income dropped 47 percent. In fact, according to a report by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School, imports of case goods from China now account for 40 percent of the U.S. market and are increasing rapidly. Remarkably, the five largest U.S. companies in the industry, including Ethan Allen, shut down 6.5 million square feet of U.S. factory space in 2001.

Clearly, the application for Trade Adjustment Assistance by former workers of the Ethan Allen Interiors factory in Beecher Falls, Vermont, meets the legal standard for certification for Trade Adjustment Assistance, which is that increased imports contributed importantly to job reductions. U.S. Government trade statistics bear out the petitioner's claim that increased furniture imports caused the loss of their jobs. The loss of these jobs to imports is a serious hardship for the workers, their families and the entire community of Beecher Falls. It leaves these workers with almost no other options for employment in the area. They need retraining and assistance to find new jobs.

I urge you to give the fullest possible consideration to the request for reconsideration for Trade Adjustment Assistance filed by the workers of the Ethan Allen factory in Beecher Falls, VT. Trade Adjustment Assistance will be essential to the ability of these dislocated workers to return successfully to the workforce.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. Please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Michael Behan in my office at (202) 225-4115 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress

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